

PRESENTED BY
Dr. M.N. KULKARNI

Promoting the Role of NGOs in Nutrition

***Guidelines for Implementing the
International Conference on
Nutrition***



Geneva NGO Working
Group on Nutrition

October 1994

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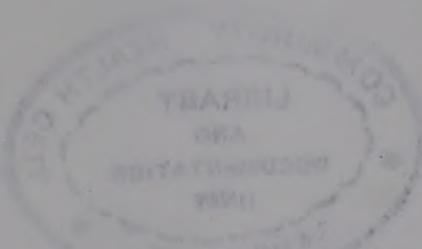
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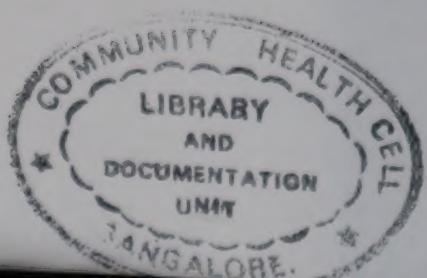
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Guidelines for Implementing the
International Conference on
Nutrition

Some basic concepts
and implications

1981-1982



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PREFACE

These Guidelines are addressed to all non governmental organizations (NGOs) and in particular to those who say, *Nutrition? No that is not for us.* It is. Nutrition concerns us all.

The 1992 International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) stressed the vital role for NGOs on the follow-up and the implementation of the Conference goals. In 1993, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), asked this Working Group to write Guidelines to help NGOs become involved. The first step was to develop a questionnaire to elicit information on the structure, lines of communication and focus of the 41 organizations connected with the Working Group or had been co-signatories to one of the three statements made at the United Nations (see Annexes). Two facts emerged very clearly from their answers:

- There is a need for greater communication and information flow between the United Nations and grass-roots organizations, NGOs, local communities, individuals, etc.
- Many NGOs were under the misapprehension that nutrition is a technical matter only, for which they have neither staff nor resources.

These Guidelines, therefore, focus on basic ICN and nutrition information and its dissemination within the framework of the ICN's goals and objectives.

The writing of the Guidelines has been made possible by funding from FAO and the close co-operation of the two Working Groups in Geneva and Rome. Both groups were formed in 1991 to encourage NGO participation in the ICN process. None of our member organizations are solely or directly concerned with nutrition. The successful completion of this project is due to the committed and collective efforts of both Working Groups, and in particular to the members of the Task Force listed on the preceding page. They have given most generously of their time, expertise and experience.

However, the work is not finished. Our intention is that the Guidelines will be of particular help to the headquarters of international NGOs and their national affiliates, as well as other national organizations. They represent a foundation upon which to build a good information system between NGOs, communities, individuals, in order to advance the goals of the ICN. They are addressed primarily to the headquarters offices of international NGOs. Once again we will invite your input and feedback.

This contribution in the follow-up of ICN is just one example of the many NGO contributions not quantifiable in monetary terms but which are carried out with good will by volunteers committed to a better future.

Thanks go to FAO for their financial support, to all members of the two Working Groups, and in particular to colleagues in the Task Force. We trust that these Guidelines will be of assistance. May your efforts be successful.

Joanna Koch

Joanna Koch
Chair, Geneva NGO Working Group on Nutrition

REFERENCES

ABBREVIATIONS

ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
EEC	European Economic Community
ESCAP	Economic Commission for Asia and Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GFP	Government Focal Point
ICN	International Conference on Nutrition
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAFTA	North-American Free Trade Agreement
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OAU	Organization of African Unity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

The International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) held in 1992 was part of a process aimed at eliminating hunger and all forms of malnutrition world-wide. In the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition adopted unanimously at the Conference, 159 Governments and the EEC pledged to address the problems of famine, starvation and poor nutrition. Nutrition was last addressed at an international level in the 1974 World Food Conference.

Nutrition is not only an essential part of the well-being of populations but is a *basic human right*. It is anchored in Article 11 of the Human Rights Charter on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and is also part of other human rights declarations.

Nutrition is at the centre of all human health and activity because of the universal human need for foods to provide energy, maintain health, and sustain life. Emergency situations of famine, famine-related deaths, starvation and nutritional deficiency diseases are problem areas in nutrition. Therefore, regardless of the project carried out by an organization, there will be an aspect of nutrition which will have an impact on the health of populations (Figure 1).

The centrality of nutrition to human life and development is emphasised by the concrete nature of the goals elaborated in the World Declaration for Nutrition. NGOs were behind the push to help the UN and Governments achieve these concrete goals and they should be at the forefront of all NGO action on nutrition.

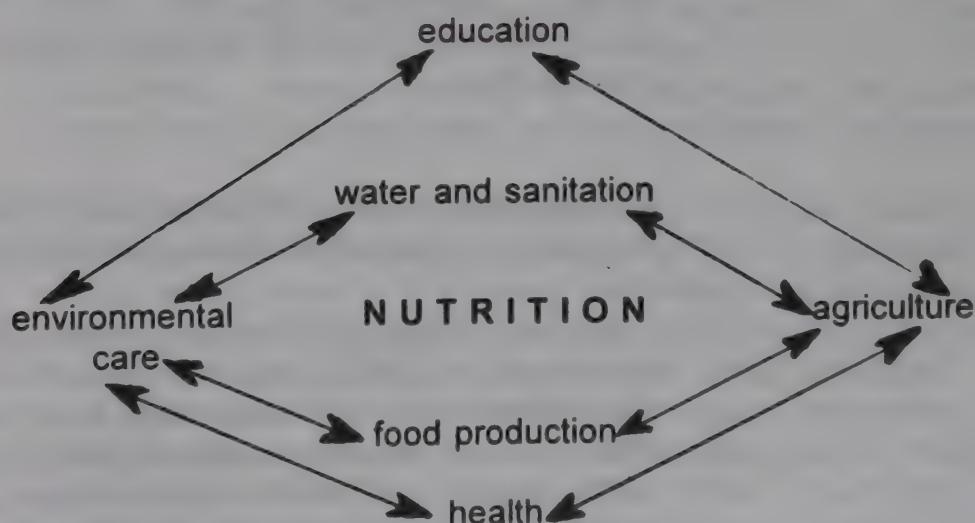


Figure 1: Nutrition and Human Needs

In past years, food production has been affected in certain parts of the world by many factors including natural calamities such as drought, as well as civil strife and unrest. Food issues were the focus of the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN), convened in December, 1992 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The Conference noted that more than 780 million people in the world, mostly from Africa, southern Asia, and Latin America do not receive enough food to meet basic needs. Issues of agricultural and food production will continue to be of global concern.

The Geneva NGO Working Group on Nutrition

These Guidelines are designed to promote the role of NGOs in nutrition and to assist NGOs at headquarters level in the effective implementation of issues identified by the International Conference on Nutrition.

The Guidelines present ideas for communication structures with affiliate and national offices. The Guidelines also provide examples of NGO action illustrating the diverse ways of mobilising and involving national affiliates, their members and local communities, on nutrition related projects. These examples also indicate how international NGO headquarters can contribute effectively to the overall aims and objectives of the ICN follow-up.

The NGO Working Group on Nutrition realised that effective Guidelines had to reflect the diverse missions within the NGO community. A survey was carried out on 41 of the international NGOs connected to the Working Group at that time, or signatories to the first UN Statements. These Guidelines are partially based on the information received from those international NGO headquarters, or from the contacts appointed by them, who responded to the questionnaire. The NGO Working Group members are listed in Annex 2.

Why should NGO affiliates and national offices be involved in National Plans of Action?

There is a need to recognise the ICN as an essential component of NGO activities. An NGO working at the international level can devise ways and means to engage the interest of the national or regional affiliates, so that they pass on the message to the local levels of their organization. This is equally true of regionally based offices who are often closer to national offices and can work together to motivate and mobilise the grass-roots to address nutrition problems.

NGOs can be in contact or liaise with international agencies who are also working at country level.

NGOs at headquarters level may find some of the following ideas to be helpful:

- Integrate nutrition as a major component of current organizational aims and objectives;
- Discuss the implications of including nutrition in NGO programmes and develop strategies for appropriate action plans;
- Create an inventory of all materials and information available in order to integrate nutrition as part of a healthy lifestyle;
- Participate at international meetings where issues of nutrition are raised; and
- Explore innovative ways of raising funds to support nutrition activities.

2. NGO INVOLVEMENT

2.1 Getting involved

How can your affiliates and national offices become more effectively involved in actions that bring the issue of nutrition to the forefront at national levels?

The call for each country to develop a National Plan of Action for Nutrition is important for the realisation of the ICN's Declaration. Among those organizations involved, NGOs are in the forefront of translating the ICN Declaration into action.

Realising that national organizations are the prime movers of any implementation plans, the role of NGO headquarters offices is very important in raising awareness, sensitising and conveying appropriate information and support to affiliates, national offices and regional groupings in the promotion of ICN activities. NGOs can play a vital role in promoting a better understanding of nutrition factors essential to health and survival. They are aware of the critical importance of access to food, land, education, information and appropriate technology.

NGOs have a unique opportunity to see that nutrition objectives are incorporated into planning levels - local, community and national government.

NGOs are well placed to know and assess the needs of vulnerable population groups such as refugees, the disabled, minorities, women and children. Nutrition is a key issue for these groups. Many NGOs have already established programmes targeting vulnerable groups through development work education, and advocacy/ lobbying. As a result, issues and activities concerning nutrition can easily be incorporated into the work of NGOs.

In promoting nutrition improvement at national levels, NGOs can identify **key areas** of operation which are in line with their own mission, operations and priorities and can find ways of collaborating with other NGOs. For example, examining the National Plans of Action and identifying possible links: - with current activities - with professionally oriented NGOs (medical associations; legal bodies; teachers' associations). Examples of activities by NGOs in nutrition are provided in these Guidelines. These examples can be used to expand or to modify current NGO activities in nutrition.

Community participation is essential to address the whole range of nutrition issues. Every community has its own experts and resources, such as traditional birth attendants, public health workers, doctors, agricultural extension workers. Nutrition can be just as much a part of primary health care programmes, covering activities as diverse as vegetable gardens for families, improved hygiene and sanitation, and access to safe drinking water. NGOs working in agricultural development also have a vital role in promoting awareness about the importance of nutrition.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

Rotary International encourages the 2600 Rotary clubs world-wide with a membership of 1.2 million to:

1. Sponsor projects registered in Rotary's "World Community Service Projects Exchange List" that requires medical equipment and supplies.
2. Send pharmaceutical supplies, such as antibiotics and doses of vitamin A, nutritional supplements, food and materials for preventive health care.
3. Train mothers and local cooks in the preparation of nutritious food, in hygiene and sanitation, and in management of nutrition education centres, and to provide educational seminars for local families.
4. Fund an orphanage or paediatric centre in an impoverished community, organise volunteers and shipments of clothing and baby food, support nutrition education, agricultural and vocational training at a maternity home for pregnant mothers.
5. Construct locally administered rural health centres, fund a free health clinic for urban street children, and develop educational activities.
6. Improve clean water facilities to promote improved hygiene and to reduce the spread of waterborne diseases.

NGOs are experienced in supporting community participation in health improvement programmes. NGOs can utilise such experience to enable communities to identify nutrition problems and to assist them in identifying relevant solutions in an integrated manner.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

The Avalon Foundation in Holland was established to stimulate organic agriculture and sustainable rural development in Central and Eastern Europe. It supports local marketing activities, and is setting up demonstration centres showing sustainable agriculture, energy saving and waste management techniques.

The majority of NGOs are working with other NGOs at both headquarters and national/regional levels. NGOs at headquarters are working with or have official relationships with UN agencies. A major problem in implementation at country levels is the duplication of activities and competition at grass-roots levels. Funding and visibility requirements are often factors leading to duplication. For headquarters NGOs with affiliates active at grass-roots levels, possible solutions to the duplication of activities would be: to encourage national and local affiliates to actively co-ordinate and collaborate with NGOs at national and regional levels; to provide support for national and local affiliates; to make inventories of organizations working on the same issues and to form coalitions and consortiums.

Possible organizations to work with include:

- NGO groupings or coalitions
- other NGOs on an individual basis
- religious communities
- community based organizations
- professional organizations
- training institutions
- UN Agencies
- policy research institutions
- private industry

Depending on the local situation, identifying other relevant institutions, agencies and government ministries at the national level can lead to combined activities in nutrition related activities. NGOs can, at the national and local levels, collaborate with private industry to address nutrition issues such as food processing and marketing, food quality, and safety. Linkages can also be made with socially oriented business groups such as the Social Ventures Network, which encourages its members to pursue environmentally friendly strategies.

National governments have policies regarding the improvement of the nutritional status of their populations, either specifically stated, or as part of overall socio-economic and human development plans and activities, which can be referred to as country level medium and long term plans. It is recommended that country affiliates of international NGOs identify the National Plans of Action for Nutrition in their own country. Country affiliates can become involved through National Planning Committees in the identification of priority areas as spelt out in the World Plan of Action for Nutrition.

The survey carried out by the NGO Working Group in Nutrition examined NGO activity at headquarters level. The sample was small, however the results are interesting. The

survey revealed that 53% of headquarters NGOs are already involved in activities related to nutrition. Many NGOs at headquarters level (47%) are distributing information materials. Most of these materials are produced by the individual NGOs concerned. There is ample opportunity to intensify headquarters level involvement in similar and other activities using opportunities to exchange available materials on nutrition and to increase inter-sectoral collaboration on specific issues on nutrition. The survey also revealed that NGOs are lobbying governments (20%), carrying out public education (13%), working with other NGOs (13%) and are influencing the media (7%)

Active consultation with the leaders of national organizations should be undertaken. From the Working Group Survey, most NGO headquarters are operative at the international level, with 60% having regionally-oriented activities.

Participation of NGOs at the national level in the implementation of the National Plans of Action is important since NGOs work with target groups in multi-sectoral areas of operation. In addition, NGOs have experience and expertise in mobilising and supporting community actions for improving health.

Most of the headquarters offices of NGOs are already involved with the National Plans of Action, primarily through information distribution activities. The way to move forward is for headquarters to find creative ways of raising awareness of NGOs at national and regional offices in order to increase their participation. NGOs have strong points which include:

- capacity to target vulnerable population groups
- motivation
- service oriented
- flexibility
- responsiveness to needs of groups
- independence
- pragmatic/creative funding in carrying out activities.

In the following pages, some ways of enlisting NGO participation in nutrition activities are listed.

2.2 International Conference on Nutrition

A. The ICN Process

An underlying principle of the ICN process was to build on country level experiences. Participation of governments in all phases of the ICN was essential to its success and is fundamental for successful follow-up. More than two years of

preparation and collaboration at national, regional and international levels preceded the Conference. In 1991 governments nominated ICN Focal Points to co-ordinate in-country ICN preparatory activities, involving the preparation of country papers, assessing and analysing national nutrition problems and actions needed to address them.

During the first half of 1992, eight regional and sub-regional meetings were held to link ICN to country and regional specific activities. In collaboration with other UN Agencies, outside experts in nutritional related field and research institutes, a variety of technical documents were prepared on nutrition problems and the nine ICN themes (noted on following page).

B. ICN Preparatory Committee Meeting

This meeting, held in Geneva in August 1992, was attended by Governments, UN Agency representatives, NGOs and experts. The aim of the meeting was to enlist the support of UN member states in addressing nutrition issues at national and global levels and to discuss and review the draft World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition.

C. The International Conference on Nutrition

The International Conference on Nutrition, jointly organised by FAO and WHO, was held in Rome in December 1992. It was attended by 1400 delegates, representing governments, 144 non-governmental organizations and fourteen UN agencies in addition to FAO and WHO. The 159 Governments present unanimously adopted the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition with its overall goal of eliminating famine and famine-related deaths, starvation and nutrition related diseases and conditions by the year 2000.

D. World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition

With the adoption of the World Declaration on Nutrition, Governments and other concerned parties pledged to make all efforts to eliminate before the end of the 1990's:

- famine and famine-related deaths;
- starvation and nutritional deficiency diseases in communities affected by natural and man-made disasters;
- iodine and vitamin A deficiencies.

They also pledged to reduce substantially within the same period:

- starvation and widespread chronic hunger;
- undernutrition, especially among children, women and the aged;

- other important micronutrient deficiencies, including iron;
- diet-related communicable and non-communicable diseases;
- social and other impediments to optimal breast-feeding;
- inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene, including unsafe drinking water.

Governments also affirmed their determination to prepare before the end of 1994, National Plans of Action for Nutrition. The World Plan of Action specifies the action necessary for achieving the Declaration goals, and provides a technical framework for National Plans of Action. It focuses on nine strategies and action areas to improve nutritional well-being:

- Incorporating nutritional objectives, considerations and components into development policies and programmes
- Improving household food security
- Protecting consumers through improved food quality and safety
- Preventing and managing infectious diseases
- Promoting breast-feeding
- Caring for the socio-economically deprived and nutritionally vulnerable
- Preventing and controlling specific micronutrient deficiencies
- Promoting appropriate diets and healthy lifestyles
- Assessing, analysing and monitoring nutrition situations.

2.3 How NGOs can increase their participation

A. ICN Follow-Up

In order to address the themes identified for the National Plan of Action for Nutrition, headquarters NGOs are encouraged to support country affiliate work with organizations such as:

- Government Focal Points or centres of activities on nutrition at country level;
- National Planning Committees addressing nutrition;
- Regional Centres, and
- Other country and regional level structures involved in implementing the World Declaration and Plans of Action for Nutrition.

What are the National Plans of Action?

The general aim of a National Plan of Action is to tackle the whole spectrum of nutritional well-being. This means that NGOs concerned with nutrition might consider the following when developing their programmes: address the problem of nutrition by addressing all aspects of the food chain:

- agricultural production, food production, quality, safety and supply

- food storage and preservation
- healthy diets and lifestyles

The World Plan of Action encourages governments to involve intersectoral ministerial departments in formulating National Plans of Action for Nutrition and to outline ways of involving NGOs in the implementation and follow-up activities. Such plans are to include measurable nutrition targets, to identify priority areas of action and programmes, indicate the technical and financial resources available and those needed for programme development and implementation, and foster continued intersectoral collaboration in addressing nutrition problems.

This multifaceted approach is paralleled in the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition, as a result there is a very important role for NGOs to both relate and co-operate with Governments in their efforts.

B. Networking

This is an important tool for NGOs in the follow-up to the ICN. In order to develop the synergy required for real change, NGOs can benefit from linking up with other organizations, creating joint programmes and/or projects.

C. Nutritional Component

Alert NGOs on how they can include a nutritional component in their activities. Provide user-friendly information on ICN and nutrition issues. Building in a nutritional component into already established programmes or activities could help alleviate staff, budget and communications constraints. The Second Call to Action (July 1994), issued by the Geneva Working Group on Nutrition, provides many examples of how to become involved.

Resources:

NGOs are chronically underfunded and are constantly trying to mobilise resources. Attempt to find funds which are available for ICN related nutrition programmes. Any application for funding must have clear project objectives, outputs, and activities, indicate clearly how the project will be managed, showing accountability and expertise. Some NGOs such as the International Federation of University Women, World Young Women's Christian Association, Global Fund for Women, etc. hold training workshops both on fund-raising and on project management.

NGOs could investigate the availability of special funds or budget allocations which might be available within UN Agencies. For specific regional funding, lists of foundations

and other donors or funders can be obtained from embassies and missions.

How can NGOs Participate in the ICN Follow-Up?

A first step for the headquarters of NGOs in encouraging affiliates and country offices in ICN follow-up actions is support in contacting their National ICN Focal Point. Affiliates can obtain the following information from the country level focal points and ask these questions:

- Is there a National Plan of Action? If so, which groups are involved, for example, National Planning or Intersectoral Committees, and at what stage has the Plan been developed?
- In the absence of a National Plan of Action on Nutrition, find out which relevant government ministries could be contacted in order to help start the process.
- Obtain a list of the Government delegates present in Rome. Encourage the Government to hold regional or national follow-up meetings on the ICN.
- What activities in nutrition are NGOs involved in within the country? Make an inventory of co-ordination and collaboration of the different NGOs in order to avoid duplication of activities.

In addition to the National ICN Focal Points, NGO headquarters, national affiliates and country offices are encouraged to contact local WHO and FAO field offices for information on nutrition issues, National Planning Committees and ICN information.

3. HOW TO IMPLEMENT NATIONAL PLANS OF ACTION

The NGO Working Group Survey showed that NGO headquarters work with other NGOs on an individual basis as well as with other NGO groups or networks. A majority of NGOs also work with religious and community based organizations. There is great potential for NGO headquarters offices to facilitate country level activities in nutrition.

NGO headquarters have a significant role in reaching out to their national affiliates and grass-roots.

3.1 Implementing National Plans of Action

A number of NGOs have carried out successful, integrated projects with national affiliates. These projects can include the ICN themes and the recommendations jointly formulated by NGOs, governments and UN agencies. The ICN themes and the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition are international instruments which NGOs can use in their discussions with governments.

For example, at its World Council, the Young Women's Christian Association issued a policy statement on nutrition, which calls on affiliates and members to use the ICN Plan of Action and introduce nutrition in local projects. The Association included parts of the ICN Plan of Action in an ACTION ALERT sent to their members and encourages workshops on nutrition and the ICN themes.

Implementation of the major themes identified by the ICN and Declaration and Plan of Action can be addressed at various levels, and through interchange among organizations and government ministries working in related areas:

- At the national and policy-making levels, through mechanisms of government/NGO/UN agency collaboration, and in national committees;
- At the provincial and/or local level for planning, and for providing technical support to implementation programmes;
- At the community level, for implementation of programmes and activities to address nutrition related problems.

The next section presents three broad areas for NGO involvement: Food, Health and Care.

3.2 NGO nutrition intervention programmes

FOOD

Adequate nutrition requires access to food, basic health services and a healthy environment. The ICN pledged to improve the nutritional status of all populations.

Improving agricultural production and household food security is one of the priority areas to be emphasised in improving nutritional status. Food products, however good they may look, do not necessarily contain all the nutritional elements to ensure a healthy diet.

Following are some of the effective activities which NGOs can undertake either directly, or in an advocacy role with national agencies and governments:

- Efficient food production practices in crop cultivation for household food security; encouraging horticulture and kitchen/household gardens for improved family nutrition.
- Effective animal husbandry.
- Appropriate use of pesticides, fungicides, food additives, veterinary drugs and other chemicals used in food production.
- Education on appropriate technology.
- Effective and appropriate food storage and preservation technology.
- Protection of the environment.
- Strengthening the status of rural women and women farmers.
- Access to adequate nutritious food, ensuring food, particularly basic essentials, is affordable.
- Establish special measures so that food reaches vulnerable groups.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

CARITAS NIGER, in co-operation with CARITAS France and CARITAS Holland is developing a nutritional flour called Bitamin. Using local ingredients like ground peanuts and the fruit of the baobab tree, this flour has a calorie value of 416 kilo calories per 100 grams. They are encouraging mothers to think about good nutrition for their babies and children. The production of Bitamin in Niger will result in reducing supplies of imported rice.

Consumer Protection

An important role for NGOs lies in their capacities to present a case to governments and other agencies, on behalf of their membership. To do this adequately it is necessary to gather factual information.

Information on quality safety and nutritional value of foods may be obtained from various sources such as ministries of agriculture, food and health, industry, commerce and consumer affairs, from research institutes, local communities and through NGOs own experiences.

The major food hazards are those caused through:

- microbiological hazards
- nutritional inadequacies
- natural toxicants and environmental contaminants
- hazards from improper use of pesticides and food additives

Food hazards are not always evident to the public and households. Consumers can feel powerless to change the situation. It is essential to advocate for food control mechanisms and policies, not only through improved food quality but also by legal measures.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

PPSEAWA, The Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA), met in Tonga in August 1994 for their 19th International Conference. Young Women of the Island Nations of the Pacific, joined 19 National Associations. The keynote address was "Food Safety at the Family Level and its Contribution to Disease Prevention and Health Protection". Discussions centred on food safety, food quality and safe, affordable and nutritionally adequate foods.

Not only NGOs but Governments and food industries have the obligation to ensure food safety and quality for consumers. Some NGOs are already specialising in consumer protection and food policy at the national, provincial and/or local level. NGOs should see how they can interrelate with these specialist groups, for example:

- Advocating for food quality control through advisory bodies and technical committees.
- Lobbying for proper legislation on food quality.
- Providing relevant information and guidance, and publications on food and food handling practices, for example, information for consumers in appropriate, ready-to-use formats and where possible, translated into the relevant languages.
- Making use of existing legal instruments and employing them for monitoring. For example, NGOs can lobby the European Parliament, the European Economic Community and other similar bodies to obtain regulations and directives which support the ICN goals.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

AFRICA 2000 Network is a UNDP project which is currently providing financial and technical support to about 400 grass-root projects, to restore environmental soundness in 15 African countries - Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The National Co-ordinator in Lesotho says *The long-lasting effects of the Network are not so much in physical development of the hectares of trees planted, number of dams built or gardens established. They are in the ability of the people to shape their future by taking appropriate decisions and actions in those things that affect them most.*

For NGOs to be effective, they must have the right information at the right time, in the right place. There is a mass of information to be found, but it is not always readily available or in a form that can be easily used by NGOs.

NGO headquarters offices can create their own user friendly information to bridge the gap between legislation for consumer protection at the international level and their local membership (grass-roots level).

HEALTH

Interventions in health include assessing, analysing and monitoring nutrition situations for specific vulnerable groups. These groups include children under 5 years, pregnant and lactating mothers, the socio-economically deprived and those displaced by war, occupation, civil disturbances and natural disasters and the elderly. The WHO Global Commission on Women's Health, at their first meeting held in April 1994 at WHO, considered nutrition to be one of the six main areas of women's health. NGOs are capable of providing intervention programmes to address nutrition problems of these groups.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

La Leche League International (LLL) is one of the leading organizations in the world supporting breast-feeding through mother-support groups. This work helps to fulfil one of the ten steps to successful breast-feeding in maternity services. LLL also gives breast-feeding management and training courses for health care professionals within the framework of the global Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative.

Breast-feeding is vital to the health of infants. The 47th World Health Assembly (1994) urged member states to promote sound infant and young child nutrition, in keeping with the commitment to the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition. NGOs have a vital role to play by increasing awareness among themselves and the general population, supporting mothers and families, training health personnel, encouraging appropriate and timely use of local weaning foods.

Micronutrient deficiencies are a matter of major public health concerns. They are widespread. According to the ICN, more than 50 million children are deficient in vitamin A and every year up to 500 000 of them become blind. Many women and children in all countries are iron deficient with consequent retarded physical growth and lower cognitive abilities. As many as 20% of maternal deaths are due to iron deficiency. 200 million people have goitre due to iodine deficiency, 26 million suffer from mental defects and six million are cretins. Deficiencies of other vitamins, zinc and other minerals are also of concern.

NGOs can exert effective action in nutrition education at grass-roots level in developing countries. In many such countries, even if food supply is satisfactory, traditional eating patterns, certain religious practices, and the use of certain traditional medicines containing toxic elements, can negatively influence nutrition and health. NGOs can address these problems insitu and can also assist UN Agencies including FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF and WHO in carrying out nutrition and health orientated activities in countries.

Another health measure which has great impact and which NGOs are able to be actively involved with is preventing and managing infectious diseases, particularly for children and their mothers. Infectious diseases place heavy demands on nutrition needs. Immunisation programmes are carried out to

prevent diseases such as: tuberculosis, polio, measles, whooping cough, tetanus, rubella, mumps. To achieve these measures, it is essential to procure vaccines, ensure transport to health posts and immunisation points in a country and maintain proper storage and an effective cold chain or refrigeration system.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) invites nurses of the world every year to celebrate International Nurses' Day (IND). A theme is selected for its relevance to nurses and the public they serve. Activities include: health fairs, parades, seminars, workshops, television and radio programmes, features in the press, articles in professional journals and health-related community outreach activities. The Council develops a relevant resource kit containing materials and ideas on how to use the material and plan for the IND programme.

In 1994 nurses have been very active in promoting family health. For example, in Samoa, nurses organised a baby contest based on the infants growth and development achievements, breast-feeding history and immunisation record. They performed a variety show consisting of songs, dances and poems about problems that affect family life, including domestic violence, suicide and substance abuse.

Water and sanitation activities are important areas in nutrition. One of the major causes of illnesses in developing countries is unsafe, contaminated water. In these countries, women and girls play an important role in providing domestic water and often carry heavy loads of water. The full participation of women at all stages of planning and implementing water and sanitation activities must be ensured in order to address their problems and to involve households in addressing water needs.

NGOs can act as catalysts to ensure the availability of safe water supplies in communities where the supplies are inadequate. For example, Soroptimist International, has installed windmills in Senegal to help bring much-needed water to a number of rural communities.

CARE

"Care" refers to the way in which nutritional needs are met and it has a central role in the ICN World Plan of Action for Nutrition. Good nutrition calls for time, attention, support services and skill in delivery. It demands special concern for vulnerable groups such as children, women, the poor and the marginalised.

There is a need to ensure food is available in sufficient variety and to promote appropriate diets and healthy lifestyles among the general population and at the household level. The provision of care is primarily a responsibility of the family. However, society and Governments have an obligation to ensure an adequate diet for all members of the public and to care for those who cannot care for themselves and who have no family support.

Women are the principal care-givers in most households. Their activities incorporate maternal and child-health related concerns. The care given to children plays a major role in the way they grow and develop and how they themselves will be able to care for future families.

Increasingly, households and women need support to care for those in their charge. As well as the increase in women-headed households, women face other problems. Early marriage and teenage pregnancies often mean low levels of education and a lack of information about family planning support and services. Men too need to be encouraged to fulfil their responsibilities within the family unit to ensure adequate levels of nutrition and care.

A lack of information can be compounded by local customs and nutritional taboos which are detrimental to a healthy diet. Women worldwide tend to be the last to share in the food available. Therefore, NGOs have a vital role to emphasise the importance of access to adequate food for women, particularly pregnant and lactating women, and children. The **Inter-African Committee**, active in 23 African countries, is an NGO working with men and women in their communities to eliminate harmful nutritional taboos and support positive nutritional practices such as breast-feeding.

NGOs have an important role in supporting families to fulfil their role as the primary provider of nutritional care. This can be done in many ways. Food can be provided through direct services to individual families and needy communities. NGOs can offer education, training and advocacy. They can publicise success stories. They have a proven record in reaching marginalised and vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the disabled, the sick, refugees and other displaced

persons. NGOs can pay special attention to the needs of the girl child, and so build the necessary foundation for a healthy life cycle.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

HELPAGE is a world-wide network of organisations working with elderly people to improve their nutrition, particularly in disaster situations. **HELPAGE** is developing a simple and practical tool to monitor and assess the nutritional needs of elderly people.

The All India Women's Conference (AIWC) is carrying out a project which is helping leprosy patients to improve their diet with nutritious crops. AIWC provides training in agriculture for leprosy communities to produce their own food.

People who care about food and nutrition should also care about agriculture and the environment. NGOs can work to reverse the deteriorating position of women in agriculture and the degradation of the environment.

Access to technology, land and credit should be assured for women farmers, with the assistance of Governments, UN agencies, grass-roots organizations and innovative rural banking systems (GRAMEEN, etc.). It is vital that the growing number of women-headed households be given recognition and the same rights as male-headed households. They should have equal access, not only to land and credit, but also to food distribution (particularly in emergency situations) and training. It is also important to promote improvement in the infrastructure of rural areas (food preservation, water, sanitation, better roads) to support rural communities and assist in arresting the rural-urban migration.

In developing countries, women play a major role not only as farmers, but as major actors at all stages of the cycle: processing, preservation and preparation. NGOs should consider education and training for women in these three areas. NGOs can encourage governments to elaborate policies and programmes which support women in the above areas.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

The World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA) holds workshops and teaches permaculture, a system of organic agriculture which uses natural systems and composting to maintain soil fertility, rather than using artificial chemicals. In addition, World YWCA teaches hydroponics, which is a method of growing food in a confined urban space.

Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) is one of the largest international organisations of rural women and women farmers. It shares its expertise in countless community projects, such as beekeeping in Uganda, mushroom culture in India and fence making in Zimbabwe. *Women Feed the World* is a co-action project with UNESCO, and it covers the whole lifespan of women.

NGOs often have a catalytic role in providing nutritional care services to the community such as the organisation of school canteens providing food for children who would otherwise not have eaten, support groups teaching people in communities who to balance traditional and modern foods as well as budget many skills training to ensure an adequate level of nutrition for all family members is maintained, particularly for the girl child.

NGO ACTION EXAMPLE

The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) utilises the skills and expertise of the partners of expatriate UN, diplomatic or NGO staff to help in projects for improving the nutrition, health and educational performance of school children through community-based school feeding programmes

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) has produced in their series "World Issues" a booklet called Food and Nutrition. The booklet covers the wide scope of nutrition and cites many on-going activities of its Associates, such as teaching how to grow fruit and vegetables, improving water and sanitation, courses on nutrition, cookery and child care.

4. PRACTICAL STEPS FOR THE ICN FOLLOW-UP

How can your affiliates and national offices become more effectively involved in actions that bring the issue of nutrition to the forefront at national levels?

Three major areas need consideration: Information; Advocacy; and Co-ordination.

INFORMATION

A. Sources

Accurate and detailed information is essential in the ICN follow-up. The Working Group on Nutrition survey indicated that most NGOs at headquarters level produce newsletters and other materials such as action alerts, press releases, fact sheets and background information (see box below on information materials). From the mass of information available however, it is not always easy to find materials that can be easily used or accessible in local languages.

The following may prove helpful:

- Establish a nutrition policy to include a position paper for general circulation for your organization.
- Make a check list of the materials currently being distributed and see where nutrition might be included.
- Obtain a copy of the ICN World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition, summarise the salient points relevant to your NGOs aims and purposes and distribute to affiliates and local offices. Encourage affiliates and local offices to translate into local languages.
- Develop fact sheets and other materials on appropriate diets and healthy lifestyles and assist affiliates, national and regional offices in disseminating such information.
- Engage the interest of members who have professional expertise in areas relevant to nutritional issues and use their drafting skills.

- Make use of the staff from local libraries, educational institutions and research institutes.
- Include topics such as food safety and quality, nutritional status, community health, income generation and the importance of safe water supply into the general programme of work. Where appropriate develop seminars and workshops around these topics.
- Organize exhibitions, poster competitions and other events to focus the attention on nutrition issues.
- Collaborate with relevant institutions, government ministries, the United Nations and other private national and international organizations to benefit from their research and documentation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • newsletters • magazines • booklets • pamphlets • posters • calendars • talks on TV/radio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manuals • fact sheets • bulletins • audio and video cassettes • journals • action alerts • press releases
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EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION MATERIALS

B. The Flow of Information

Information is valuable and a tool for future action when it quickly flows through an organization to the local membership and feedback returned to headquarters. Such a system provides members with the capacity to act locally. It also provides the means to relay member's opinions to headquarters and so affect advocacy. (see Figure. 2)

In this regard, members of an NGO also have an important role in sharing knowledge widely. By reaching to other organizations and the general public, NGOs can have a powerful effect on spreading the ICN message.

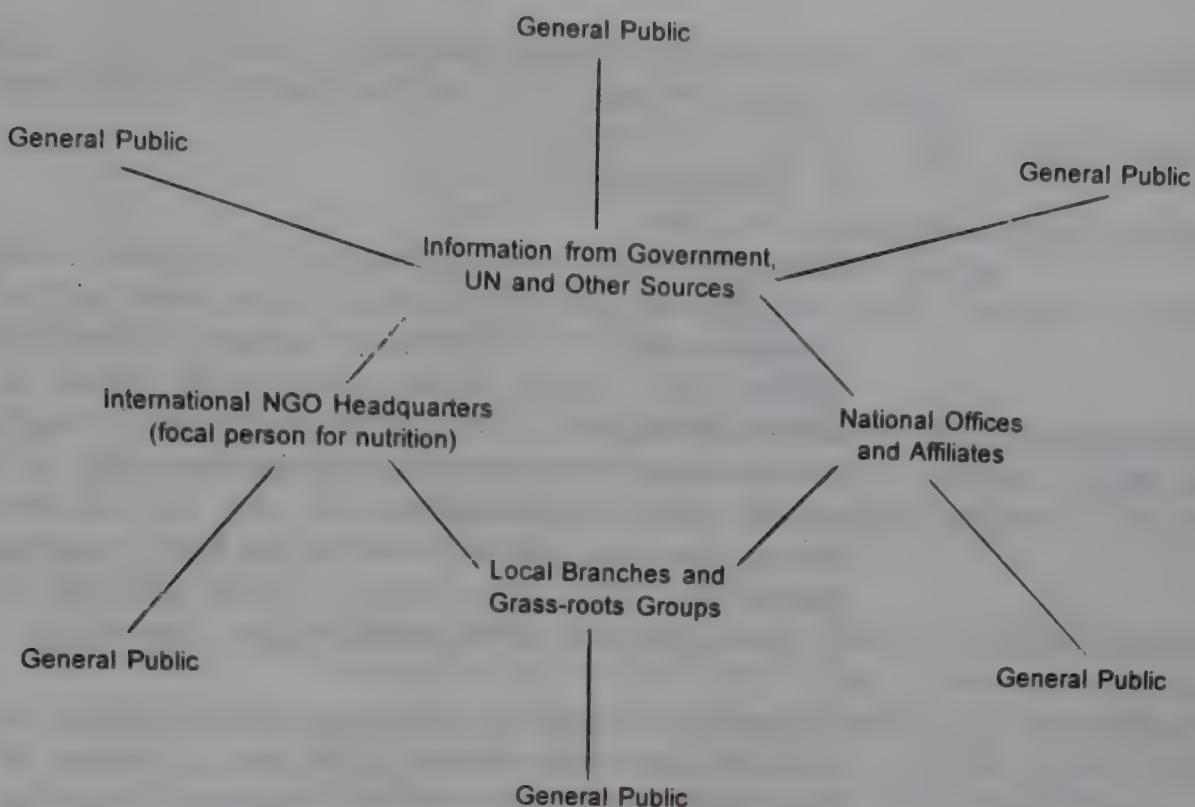


Figure 2: Information Flows

Ideas for action:

- Evaluate the current system for the exchange of information between headquarters affiliates and national offices. Where necessary set up a new system.
- Encourage the membership to develop partnerships with community outreach programmes to include nutrition issues. Target groups should include the general public, school children, women especially mothers, food handlers and catering institutions.
- Network with community groups that aim to educate the public, address consumer concerns, monitor standards and initiate corrective actions.
- Support market surveys on food products and make known mechanisms for addressing consumer concerns.
- Recognise the importance of basic nutrition and the need to formulate and monitor nutrition indicators and research. Work with all those concerned with such nutrition related projects including government ministries.
- Celebrate World Food Day and encourage others to do so.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy to include member's opinions in the process of decision making is an important aspect of NGO work.

A. International

There are many opportunities to make such interventions during the regular programme of work carried out by national delegates with the United Nations system. Many international NGOs have representatives permanently based at the UN Centres to follow such meetings and report to headquarters. UN sponsored international conferences such as the ICN provide similar opportunities. In fact, the Working Group survey identified that about half of the NGO headquarters at international level were already involved with the ICN Plans of Action, primarily through information distribution.

Contacts with decision makers can also be made across the wide range of international agencies to include the World Bank, IMF, WTO (former GATT). Regional groupings should also be considered such as the EU, NAFTA, the OAU and the five regional commissions of the UN system: ECA, ECLA, ESCWA, ECE and ESCAP.

B. National

NGOs give more support to making their voices heard on nutrition issues at the national level. In this way Governments can be encouraged to implement decisions they have made at the international level, for example by formulating policies which ensure sustainable household security and adequate nutrition as a basic human right. This national NGO activity can also serve to maximise the current role played by NGOs at international headquarters.

To enhance advocacy the following may prove helpful:

- Develop position papers on one aspect of nutrition from the major themes identified in the ICN and use such position papers to emphasise the nutritional problems affecting the disadvantaged - women and children, the elderly, disabled, refugees and migrants.
- Prepare position papers for major conferences at the local, regional and international level, linking nutrition issues to the NGOs individual mandate. Use such position papers as the basis for local position papers.
- Promote NGO issues on nutrition through the information materials suggested in these Guidelines, for example fact sheets, letters.

- Identify policy areas requiring change, for example advocating for:
 - Agricultural policies which have a positive impact on food production and security;
 - Environmentally sound and sustainable development;
 - Policies of health and development which meet the needs of disadvantaged groups;
 - Emphasising nutritional status as one of the indicators of development.
- Encourage Governments to improve the infrastructures of rural areas, i.e. water, sanitation, roads in order to help arrest the growing and serious problem of rural-urban migration.
- Communicate your nutritional policies to governmental liaisons, policy makers and other relevant officials in government departments. Locate the appropriate government contacts through the Public Information Department or through Women's National Machinery.
- Encourage affiliates, national, community and local groups to become involved in nutrition activities.
- Contact the ICN Government Focal Point at country level. Offer expertise and seek membership of the National Planning Committee formed to implement the ICN National Plan of Action.
- Identify at the country level members who were part of the national delegation at the ICN Conference and consider them as speakers for NGO meetings and contacts for further information.
- Establish contacts and relations with legislators.
- Use letters, oral interventions and written statements to promote member views on nutrition.
- Engage the media to spread awareness of NGO thinking.
- Advance the need for nutrition education programmes at different levels for example in schools with health professionals and at the community level. Nutrition education should include measures for food safety, hygiene in mass catering, prevention of food-borne infections and street food safety.

CO-ORDINATION

Effective co-ordination among many different individuals both within and outside NGOs is essential if the aims and objectives of the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition are to be met. To achieve success, National Government Focal Points have been put in place.

NGOs may also wish to put in a nutrition focal point for the organization as a whole. This individual could facilitate appropriate follow-up nutrition activities at the country level such as ensuring that local and community level organizations and groupings are included in policy formulation and plans of action. Effective international and national interventions can only be achieved if local contexts are taken into account.

To enhance the linkages on nutrition within an organization, identify NGO members responsible for nutrition at the international, regional, national and local levels to co-ordinate information and advocacy. Provide opportunities for interaction among these members through access to telecommunications (Fax, Email). Other ideas include:

- Encourage affiliates to join or form a national coalition with other NGOs working in the field of nutrition.
- Assist affiliates in monitoring the implementation of the ICN Plan of Action for Nutrition in co-operation with national coalitions.
- Support affiliates at country level influencing how resources are used in particular government spending on viable projects.
- Seek out and use local expertise, resources and initiatives fully in carrying out plans on nutrition.

FEEDBACK

The Geneva Working Group on Nutrition welcomes your comments, ideas and experiences in your nutrition activities. We would also be interested to learn of any obstacles you are encountering in your role of promoting nutrition and the ICN follow-up. This would enable us to exchange ideas and promote debate through our Call to Action sheets.

In order to further ICN action at country levels, the following information from you will assist in follow-up of actions taken:

1. How have you used the Guidelines?
2. What are the areas you will need further information on?
3. What additional areas should the Guidelines address?

Please address your comments to:

Geneva Working Group on Nutrition
PO Box 200
1211 Geneva 20 (CIC)
Switzerland

5. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Universities, institutes, and resource organizations can be very good sources of information. The relevant local or nearest office of the following organizations can provide some of the information and resource materials listed in these Guidelines.

FAO
WHO
UNDP
UNICEF

A complete list of all Government ICN Focal Points is available from the Geneva Working Group on Nutrition upon request. The ICN Joint Secretariat (FAO and WHO) made a number of publications available on the ICN and related issues.

The following are useful resource materials on nutrition.

PUBLICATIONS:

Adamson, P., *Facts for Life: A Communication Challenge*. U.K.: UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, UNFPA, 1993.

David A. Cleveland and Daniela Soleri, *Food from Dryland Gardens*, Centre for People, Food and Environment, 344 South Third Ave., Tucson, Arizona, 85701 USA, 1991.

Inter-Africa Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. Newsletter No. 11, December 1991. 147 rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland.

International Council of Nurses, *Healthy Families for Healthy Nations*, International Nurses' Day, 1994, 3 Place Jean Marteau, CH - 1201, Geneva, Switzerland.

Jacobson, Jodi L. "Women's Health: The Price of Poverty." In *The Health of Women: A Global Perspective*. Marjorie A. Koblinsky, Judith Timyan, and Jill Gay, eds. Washington, DC: The World Bank, April 1992.

Kyenkywa-Isabirye, Margaret. "UNICEF Launches the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative." MCN: *The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing* 17 (July/August 1992): 177-179.

Myers, Robert G. *Toward a Fair Start for Children: Programming for Early Childhood Care and Development on the Developing World*. UNESCO. Paris, 1990.

"Refugee Families." *The Family. Bulletin on the International Year of the Family*, 1994. No. 1 (1991):1.

Ruzek, S.A. "Towards a More Inclusive Model of Women's Health." *American Journal of Public Health* 83 No. 1 (January 1993):6-7.

Saadeh, Randa J. *Breast-feeding: The Technical Basis and Recommendations for Action*. Geneva: World Health Organisation, 1993.

FAO PUBLICATIONS:

FAO, *Guidelines: Developing National Plans of Action for Nutrition*. Rome: FAO, 1993.

FAO, *Horticultural Marketing: A Resource and Training Manual for Extension Officers*. Rome: FAO.

FAO, *Integrating Nutrition into Agricultural and Rural Development Projects: A Manual*. Rome: FAO, 1984.

FAO, *Integrating Nutrition into Agricultural and Rural Development Projects: Six Case Studies*. Rome: FAO, 1984.

FAO, *Data Needs for Assessing the Nutritional Effects of Agricultural and Rural Development Projects: A Paper for Project Planners*. Rome: FAO, 1983.

FAO, *Conducting Small Scale Nutrition Surveys: A Field Manual*. Rome: FAO, 1990.

FAO, *The Fifth World Food Survey*. Rome: FAO, 1987.

FAO, *Analysis of Food Consumption Survey Data for Developing Countries*. Rome: FAO, 1980.

FAO, *Body Mass Index: A Measure of Chronic Energy Deficiency in Adults*. Rome: FAO, 1994.

FAO, *Women in Food Production, Food Handling and Nutrition, with Special Emphasis on Africa*. Rome: FAO, 1979.

FAO, *Summary of the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) Country Papers for Selected Countries in the Near East Region*. Cairo: FAO Regional Office for the Near East, 1993.

WHO PUBLICATIONS:

WHO, "The World-wide Magnitude of Protein-energy Malnutrition: An Overview from the WHO Global Database on Child Growth." *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 71(6): 703-712.

WHO, *Physical Status: The Use and Interpretation of Anthropometry*. Geneva: WHO, in press.

WHO, *The Treatment and Management of Severe Protein-energy Malnutrition*. Geneva: WHO (in press).

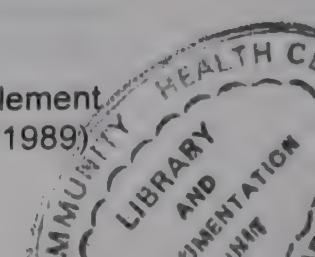
WHO, *Iodine and Health: Eliminating Iodine Deficiency Disorders Safely Through Salt Iodization: A Statement by the World Health Organization*. Document WHO/NUT/94.4

WHO, *Global Prevalence of Iodine Deficiency Disorders: Report of the WHO Micronutrient Deficiency Information System (MDIS)*. Geneva: WHO, 1993.

WHO, *Global Prevalence of Vitamin A Deficiency: Report of the WHO Micronutrient Deficiency Information System (MDIS)*. Geneva: WHO, 1994.

WHO, "Infant Feeding: The Physiological Basis". Supplement to *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. Vol. 67 (1989).

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WHO, *Minor and Trace Elements in Human Nutrition*. Geneva, World Health Organization (in press).

Joint WHO/UNICEF Nutrition Support Programme, *Nutrition Learning Packages*. Geneva: WHO, 1989.

WHO/UNICEF. *Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breast-feeding: A Joint WHO/UNICEF Statement*. Geneva: WHO, 1989.

OTHER WHO MATERIALS:

Health Posters: A collection of 12 posters to highlight some of WHO's health messages from its beginnings in 1948, and looking forward to the year 2000.

Water and Health: A collection of 12 postcards highlighting the relationship between safe water and health.

Tropical Diseases: A collection of 12 postcards to illustrate the response to the threat of tropical diseases in many countries of the world.

WHO and Health Workers: A collection of 24 postcards highlighting WHO's efforts, through collaboration with countries, organizations and institutions, to help health workers of all kinds to offer better health education and care to their communities world wide.

JOINT FAO/WHO PUBLICATIONS:

Adhoc FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Health and Nutritional Aspects of Agriculture and Rural Development Projects. Rome: FAO, 1987.

FAO/WHO, *Major Issues for Nutrition Strategies*. Rome: FAO, December 1992.

FAO/WHO, *Nutrition and Development - A Global Assessment*. Rome: FAO, December 1992.

FAO/WHO, *International Conference on Nutrition, World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition*. Rome: FAO, December, 1992.

FAO/WHO, *Major Issues for Nutrition Strategies*. Rome: FAO, 1992.

FAO/WHO, *Nutrition Profiles of the Developing Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region*. Bangkok: FAO/WHO, 1993.

FAO/WHO, *Fats and Oils in Human Nutrition: Report of a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation*. Rome: FAO (in preparation).

The British Nutrition Foundation produces a wide range of information. They have a food and nutrition programme, funded by the UK Government for use in schools, "Food - a fact of life". Details of prices on request from: British Nutrition Foundation, High Holborn House, 52-54 High Holborn, London WC1V 6RQ, England.

VIDEOS: FAO

FAO, *The Role of Food Quality in Food Security, Trade and Health*, 1990. (PAL; English)

FAO, *Street Foods in West Africa*, 1992. (UMATIC, PAL, SECAM; English)

FAO, *Street Foods in Asia*, 1991. (UMATIC NTSC, UMATICPAL, VHS PAL, Beta Max PAL; English)

FAO, *Campana del consumidor: el que sabe lo que come mejor le sabe*, 1993. (PAL, NTSC; Spanish)

FAO, *Venta callejera de alimentos: Un problema, una oportunidad y un desafío para el desarrollo*, 1992. (PAL; Spanish)

FAO, *World Food Day: "Food and Nutrition- A Basic Human Right"*, 1992. (PAL, NTSC; English, French, Spanish)

FAO, *Capacitacion a vendedores callejeros de alimentos: Mod. I: La salud de la poblacion- '13. Mod. II: Condiciones y caracter del lugar de preparacion y venta de alimentos- 7'. Mod. III: Salud, presentacion e higiene del manipulador-venedor de alimentos- 11'*. 1993. (PAL; Spanish)

FAO, *Horticultural Marketing*. - a video on horticultural marketing and produced as supporting material for the Marketing and Credit Service manual, *Horticultural marketing: A Resource and Training Manual for Extension Officers*. (VHS/PAL, VHS, SECAM, VHS/NTSC or others; English, French, Spanish and Arabic)

FAO/ WHO, *Nutrition: The Global Challenge*. 1992. (PAL, NTSC; English, French)

VIDEOS: WHO

WHO, *Women's Right to Health*. The health problems of women are determined by diverse socio-economic factors. Although girls are born with a biological advantage over boys which makes them more resistant to infection, this advantage is often cancelled out by the social disadvantages they suffer. Differential feeding practices, additional burdens of work, and lack of basic schooling put girls at great risk of malnutrition

and disease. Early marriage, as practised in many areas, forces women into the reproductive cycle before they are physically and socially mature, and sets the pattern for repeated pregnancies, often at the risk of their own lives. (VHS, English).

Distribution and Sales:

FAO: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy.
Note: there is a discount for FAO member countries on some materials.

WHO: 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland. Tel: (41 22) 791 24 76. Fax: (41 22) 788 04 01.

ANNEXE 1

WORLD DECLARATION ON NUTRITION

1. We, the Ministers and the Plenipotentiaries representing 159 states and the European Economic Community at the International Conference on Nutrition (Rome, December 1992), declare our determination to eliminate hunger and to reduce all forms of malnutrition. Hunger and malnutrition are unacceptable in a world that has both the knowledge and the resources to end this human catastrophe. We recognize that access to nutritionally adequate and safe food is a right of each individual. We recognize that globally there is enough food for all and that inequitable access is the main problem. Bearing in mind the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we pledge to act in solidarity to ensure that freedom from hunger becomes a reality. We also declare our firm commitment to work together to ensure sustained nutritional well-being for all people in a peaceful, just and environmentally safe world.

2. Despite appreciable worldwide improvements in life expectancy, adult literacy and nutritional status, we all view with the deepest concern the unacceptable fact that about 780 million people in developing countries — 20 percent of their combined population — still do not have access to enough food to meet their basic daily needs for nutritional well-being.

3. We are especially distressed by the high prevalence and increasing numbers of malnourished children under five years of age in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, more than 2 000 million people, mostly women and children, are deficient in one or more micronutrients: babies continue to be born mentally retarded as a result of iodine deficiency; children go blind and die of vitamin A deficiency; and enormous numbers of women and children are adversely affected by iron deficiency. Hundreds of millions of people also suffer from communicable and non-communicable diseases caused by contaminated food and water. At the same time, chronic non-communicable diseases related to excessive or unbalanced dietary intakes often lead to premature deaths in both developed and developing countries.

4. We call on the United Nations to consider urgently the issue of declaring an International Decade of Food and Nutrition, within existing structures and available resources, in order to give additional emphasis to achieving the objectives of this World Declaration on Nutrition. Such consideration should give particular emphasis to the food and nutrition problems of Africa, and of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. We recognize that poverty and the lack of education, which are often the effects of underdevelopment, are the primary causes of hunger and undernutrition. There are poor people in most societies who do not have adequate access to food, safe water and sanitation, health services and education, which are the basic requirements for nutritional well-being.

6. We commit ourselves to ensuring that development programmes and policies lead to a sustainable improvement in human welfare, are mindful of the environment and are conducive to better nutrition and health for present and future generations. The multifunctional roles of agriculture, especially with regard to food security, nutrition, sustainable agriculture and the conservation of natural resources, are of particular importance in this context. We must implement at family, household, community, national and international levels, coherent agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, food, nutrition, health, education, population, environmental, economic and social policies and programmes to achieve and maintain balance between the population and available resources and between rural and urban areas.

7. Slow progress in solving nutrition problems reflects the lack of human and financial resources, institutional capacity and policy commitment in many countries needed to assess the nature, magnitude and causes of nutrition problems and to implement concerted programmes to overcome them. Basic and applied scientific research, as well as food and nutrition surveillance systems, are needed to more clearly identify the factors that contribute to the problems of malnutrition and the ways and means of eliminating these problems, particularly for women, children and aged persons.

8. In addition, nutritional well-being is hindered by the continuation of social, economic and gender disparities; of discriminatory practices and laws; of floods, cyclones, drought, desertification and other natural calamities; and of many countries' inadequate budgetary allocations for agriculture, health, education and other social services.

9. Wars, occupations, civil disturbances and natural disasters, as well as human rights violations and inappropriate socio-economic policies, have resulted in tens of millions of refugees, displaced persons, war-affected non-combatant civilian populations and migrants, who are among the most nutritionally vulnerable groups. Resources for rehabilitating and caring for these groups are often extremely inadequate and nutritional

deficiencies are common. All responsible parties should cooperate to ensure the safe and timely passage and distribution of appropriate food and medical supplies to those in need, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

10. Changing world conditions and the reduction of international tensions have improved the prospects for a peaceful solution of conflicts and have given us an opportunity as never before to redirect our resources increasingly towards productive and socially useful purposes to ensure the nutritional well-being of all people, especially the poor, deprived and vulnerable.

11. We recognize that the nutritional well-being of all people is a pre-condition for the development of societies and that it should be a key objective of progress in human development. It must be at the centre of our socio-economic development plans and strategies. Success is dependent on fostering the participation of the people and the community and multisectoral actions at all levels, taking into account their long-term effects. Shorter-term measures to improve nutritional well-being may need to be initiated or strengthened to complement the benefits resulting from longer-term development efforts.

12. Policies and programmes must be directed towards those most in need. Our priority should be to implement people-focused policies and programmes that increase access to and control of resources by the rural and urban poor, raise their productive capacity and incomes and strengthen their capacity to care for themselves. We must support and promote initiatives by people and communities and ensure that the poor participate in decisions that affect their lives. We fully recognize the importance of the family unit in providing adequate food, nutrition and a proper caring environment to meet the physical, mental, emotional and social needs of children and other vulnerable groups, including the elderly. In circumstances where the family unit can no longer fulfil these responsibilities adequately, the community and/or government should offer a support network to the vulnerable. We, therefore, undertake to strengthen and promote the family unit as the basic unit of society.

13. The right of women and adolescent girls to adequate nutrition is crucial. Their health and education must be improved. Women should be given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process and to have increased access to and control of resources. It is particularly important to provide family planning services to both men and women and to provide support for women, especially working women, whether paid or unpaid, throughout pregnancy and breast-feeding and during the early childhood period. Men should also be motivated through appropriate education to assume an active role in the promotion of nutritional well-being.

14. Food aid may be used to assist in emergencies, to provide relief to refugees and displaced persons and to support household food security and community and economic development. Countries receiving emergency food aid should be provided with sufficient resources to enable them to move on from the rehabilitation phase to development, so that they will be in a position to cope with future emergencies. Care must be taken to avoid creating dependency and to avoid negative impacts on food habits and on local food production and marketing. Before food aid is reduced or discontinued, steps should be taken to alert recipient countries as much in advance as possible so that they can identify alternative sources and implement other approaches. Where appropriate, food aid may be channelled through NGOs with local and popular participation, in accordance with the domestic legislation of each country.

15. We reaffirm our obligations as nations and as an international community to protect and respect the need for nutritionally adequate food and medical supplies for civilian populations situated in zones of conflict. We affirm in the context of international humanitarian law that food must not be used as a tool for political pressure. Food aid must not be denied because of political affiliation, geographic location, gender, age, ethnic, tribal or religious identity.

16. We recognize the fact that each government has the prime responsibility to protect and promote food security and the nutritional well-being of its people, especially the vulnerable groups. However, we also stress that such efforts of low-income countries should be supported by actions of the international community as a whole. Such actions should include an increase in official development assistance in order to reach the accepted United Nations target of 0.7 percent of the GNP of developed countries as reiterated at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development¹. Also, further renegotiation or alleviation of external debt could contribute in a substantive manner to the nutritional well-being in medium-income countries as well as in low-income ones.

¹Developed countries reaffirm their commitments to reach the accepted United Nations target of 0.7 percent of GNP for ODA and, to the extent that they have not yet achieved that target, agree to augment their aid programmes in order to reach that target as soon as possible and to ensure prompt and effective implementation of Agenda 21. Some countries have agreed to reach the target by the year 2000. Those countries that have already reached the target are to be commended and encouraged to continue to contribute to the common effort to make available the substantial additional resources that have to be mobilized. Other developed countries, in line with their support for reform efforts in developing countries, agree to make their best efforts to increase their level of ODA. (Report of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro 1992, paragraph 33 131)

17. We acknowledge the importance of further liberalization and expansion of world trade, which would increase foreign exchange earnings and employment in developing countries. Compensatory measures will continue to be needed to protect adversely affected developing countries and vulnerable groups in medium- and low-income countries from negative effects of structural adjustment programmes.

18. We reaffirm the objectives for human development, food security, agriculture, rural development, health, nutrition and environment and sustainable development enunciated in a number of international conferences and documents.² We reiterate our commitment to the nutritional goals of the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and the World Summit for Children.³

19. As a basis for the Plan of Action for Nutrition and guidance for formulation of national plans of action, including the development of measurable goals and objectives within time frames, we pledge to make all efforts to eliminate before the end of this decade:

- famine and famine-related deaths;
- starvation and nutritional deficiency diseases in communities affected by natural and man-made disasters;
- iodine and vitamin A deficiencies.

We also pledge to reduce substantially within this decade:

- starvation and widespread chronic hunger;
- undernutrition, especially among children, women and the aged;
- other important micronutrient deficiencies, including iron;
- diet-related communicable and non-communicable diseases;
- social and other impediments to optimal breast-feeding;
- inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene, including unsafe drinking-water.

20. We resolve to promote active cooperation among governments, multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, communities and individuals to eliminate progressively the causes that lead to the scandal of hunger and all forms of malnutrition in the midst of abundance.

21. With a clear appreciation of the intrinsic value of human life and the dignity it commands, we adopt the attached Plan of Action for Nutrition and affirm our determination to revise or prepare, before the end of 1994, our national plans of action, including attainable goals and measurable targets, based on the principles and relevant strategies in the attached Plan of Action for Nutrition. We pledge to implement it.

² The World Food Conference, 1974; the Alma Ata Conference on Primary Health Care, 1978; the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, 1979; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979, especially articles 12 and 13; the Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding, 1990; the Montreal Policy Conference on Micronutrient Malnutrition, 1991; the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992.

³ See Annex 1.

ANNEXE 2

MEMBERS OF THE GENEVA NGO WORKING GROUP ON NUTRITION

- All India Women's Conference (AIWC)
- American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
- Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW)
- Association of Finnish Women (AFW)
- ATD Quart Monde
- Baha'i International
- Caritas International
- Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC)
- International Federation of University Women (IFUW)
- International Alliance of Women (IAW)
- International Council of Nurses (ICN)
- International Council of Women (ICW)
- International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)
- International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBW)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRC)
- International Federation of the Aging (IFA)
- International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE)
- International Federation Terre des Hommes
- International Federation of Women in Legal Professions (IFWLP)
- La Leche League International (LLL)
- Medecins sans Frontiers (MSF)
- Medical Women's International Association (MWIA)
- Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA)
- Soroptimist International (SI)
- Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF)
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)
- World Federation of Mental Health (WFMH)
- World Federation of Methodist Women (WFMW)
- World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)
- World Lutheran Federation (WLF)
- World Organisation of Scout Movements (WOSM)
- World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO)
- World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

ANNEXE 3

List of NGOs who signed one of the following three statements presented to the United Nations:

1. Working Group Plenary Statement, ICN, Rome, 1992
2. 1993 UN Commission on the Status of Women
3. 1993 World Conference on Human Rights

- * Commonwealth Medical Association (CMA)
- Food First Action Network (FIAN)
- Health for Minorities
- International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)
- * International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW)
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
- International Save the Children (ISC)
- World Christian Life Community (WCLC)
- Zonta International

